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hasty preparation or of the occupancy of an unfamiliar field — errors which a second edition, sure to be wanted, will easily correct ; while its advantages are so manifest that it cannot fail of an extensive usefulness. — R. H. W.

RECENT ORNITHOLOGICAL PUBLICATIONS. — With the close of the year we have two papers of interest. Dr. H. M. Bannister, whose name is associated with the late explorations in Alaska, offers \* “A Sketch of the Classification of the American Anserinæ,” which renders our information more precise, if not more extended. Excluding the genera *Dendrocygna* and *Chenalopex*, he divides the Geese proper into two sections, *Anseræ* and *Philactæ*. The former of these includes the two typical genera, *Anser* and *Branta*,† in which the sexes are alike, and the plumage nowhere metallic ; and three sub-typical genera, all South American, viz. : *Oressochen*, n. g., *Chloetrophus*, n. g., and *Chloephaga* Eyt., in which either the sexes are dissimilar, or else the plumage has iridescent tints. The *Philactæ* are marked by the presence “of deep rough superorbital depressions, and reversed relative proportions of tarsus and middle toe [the former shorter or not longer than the latter], together with an exclusively sea-coast habitat, and a carnivorous diet, corresponding in some of these respects with the *Oidemiæ* and *Somateriæ* among ducks” (p. 130). This section embraces one North American species usually called *Chloephaga canagica*, here made the type of *Philacte*, n. g. ; and the South American *Taenidiestes antarctica*. Of the naturalness of this arrangement, as well as of its convenience, there is probably no doubt, and though division *genericé* may seem pushed to an extreme, yet this conforms to the usage of the day ; the only question is, whether corresponding subtilty would not demand the recognition of *Chen*, and even *Exanthemops*, as distinct from *Anser*. We regret that the paper is defaced by too numerous and inexcusable typographical errors, for which, however, we happen to know that the author is not responsible.

In the list of North American species we notice the absence of *Anser albatrus* and *Branta leucopareia* ; the former, if only indeed a small race of *A. hyperboreus*, we should judge entitled to recognition ; but the latter has doubtless no such claims ; nor should

\* Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci., Philada., Sept.-Dec., 1870, p. 130.

† Scopoli, 1769, ex Klein, type *A. bernicla* L. ; nec Boié, 1822, type *Anas rufina* Pall. ; thus equal to, and antedating, *Bernicla* Boié, 1822.

we be surprised if *B. Hutchinsii* itself were finally resolved into a conspecies with *B. Canadensis*, despite the nearly constant discrepancy in the number of rectrices. *A. coerulescens*, on the contrary, appears perfectly distinct, as Dr. Bannister has it; and *B. leucopsis* has lately been twice authenticated as American. The author queries *A. ferus* and *A. segetum* as American; we do not know upon what authority, having had no previous suspicion of their occurrence in this country. A comparison of the North American and European *Anseres*, given below,\* which we are, in part, enabled to make through the personal attentions of Prof. A. Newton, offers some interesting points:—

Thus it appears that while Anser proper is essentially European, and Chen as decidedly North American, they have both been developed in a parallel series, as it were, to an equal number of species, that may be regarded as strictly analogous, each for each. Such a division of the geese is in remarkable contrast to the great number of species as well as genera of ducks that are common to both countries. But without space to pursue the subject, we turn to the second paper above alluded to.

Mr. Ridgway very creditably maintains ‡ the position he secured by his first contribution to ornithology, in this more elaborate paper, which is, nevertheless, only “preliminary to a ‘monograph of the North American Raptores,’” upon which he has been long engaged. We trust it may soon appear, since, to judge by this forerunner, it promises to be of high interest and importance.

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* Genus ANSER auct.	
Americani.]	[Europæi.
a. CHEN.	b. ANSER ipse.
a.' Variegatus, capite colloque albis.	
<i>Cerulescens</i> L.	<i>Ferus</i> L. Ungue rostri albo, campterio pallidè griseo.
b.' Nivei, rem. primar. nigris.	
<i>Hyperboreus</i> † Pall. Major; long. tot. 2½-ped., alis ferè 1½-ped., rostr. 2½-poll.	<i>Segetum</i> Gm. Ungue nigro, campterio fuscogriseo, pedibus aurantiacis.
<i>Albatus</i> Cass. Minor; long. tot. bipedal., alis 1½-ped., rostr. bipoll.	<i>Brachyrhynchus</i> Baill. Rost. breviss., ungue nigro, campterio griseo, ped. incarnatis.
<i>Rossii</i> Bd. Minimus; rostr. verrucoso, etc.	<i>Erythropus</i> L. (nec auct.; <i>minutus</i> N., <i>Temminckii</i> B.) Minimus; similis A. albifronti.
(b. ANSER ipse.)	
<i>Gambeli</i> Hartl. Simillimus A. albifronti; rostro longiore (1½—2-poll.).	<i>Albifrons</i> Gm. Ungue albo, campterio fuscogriseo, pedibus aurantiacis, rostri long 1½—1¾-poll.

† *Chen hyperboreus* also occurs in Europe. (Germany, Naum. V. D., xi, 221.)

‡ A New Classification of the North American *Falconidae*, with Descriptions of three New Species. Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philad., Sept.-Dec., 1870, p. 138.

The present paper witnesses his laborious and conscientious application, rewarded with gratifying results in the elucidation of a difficult subject. Hitherto, we are bound to say, our Raptorial birds have been investigated with only moderate success, and, in fact, their technical details of form, etc., have never before been properly worked out, nor adequately presented. To this is due much of the prevalent and acknowledged confusion, for which, fortunately, there will hereafter be little excuse. Mr. Ridgway's analyses and diagnoses are drawn with care and precision, and carried to such circumstantial detail, that his paper is really the next best thing after specimens themselves. He shows a "hawk's eye" for differences, and skill in rendering them antithetically; if his generalizations keep pace with his analysis, he will not be in danger of losing the broad bearings of a subject in the very richness of detail that he elaborates. But a certain embarrassment in this respect may be found, as a matter of typographical execution; at least, we confess that we studied out the interrelation of some of the numbered and lettered paragraphs with difficulty. Besides this small point, the omission, in treating of external characters, of any reference to the ear-aperture of *Circus*, and mention, in several places, of the tibio-tarsal joint as the "knee," call for criticism.

The classification is based upon a character that has hitherto received little or no attention:—the condition of the os lachrymale, that, in most *Falconidae*, forms a projecting superciliary shield, or "eye-brow," and mainly confers the decided and threatening gaze of these birds. This, with the shape of the nostrils, the toothling or lobing of the tomia,\* some points in the structure of the feet, and the facial disc of *Circus*, furnish a basis for six subfamilies—*Falconidae*, *Circinae*, *Accipitrinae*, *Haliaetinae*, *Milvinae* and *Polyborinae*. If reliance, primarily, upon any single character seems always more or less arbitrary, it is often surprising how well it works, in marking off sections already determined upon other grounds. Thus the absence of a superciliary shield distinguishes *Milvinae* and *Polyborinae* from all the rest. To those of us, however, who always associate *Pandion* with *Haliaetus*, it is a novelty to find the genus placed in *Milvinae*; although, as the surprise wears off, we may well ask why not, seeing how many characters Mr. Ridgway shows that it shares with *Elanus*, among them

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\*Tomia (Gr. *τομος*, a cutting, from *γемνεν*); "the cutting edges of the mandibles."

the peculiar formation of the claws, and the reticulated tarsi. Perhaps, however, we may escape a dilemma, by compounding with Mr. Ridgway upon his own suggestion (p. 143), that "most of the characters of this genus are so unique that it is almost entitled to the rank of a subfamily." We are glad to see a certain "subfamily" *Aquilinæ*, done away with; for the Eagles proper seem to be nothing but overgrown *Buteones*, and it might puzzle one to find, for instance, very striking generic characters between *Aquila chrysaetus* and *Archibuteo lagopus*. We willingly relegate them to *Buteoninæ*, even if, in consequence, we must leave the Fishing Eagles alone to support a subfamily *Haliaetinæ*, as Mr. Ridgway does. The only point about which we take serious issue with the author, is in placing *Astur* and *Accipiter* with *Buteo*, etc., in a subfamily *Accipitrinæ*. Aware that it is hard to draw a technical line between the hawks and the buzzards, we are yet persuaded that there is an essential difference. The *Astures* are only less "noble" than the falcons themselves, whose spirit they share, if, indeed, in a weaker frame, yet in one almost equally fitted for dashing action; while in their mode of preying, the nature of their prey, and their general habits, they are removed from the lymphatic buzzards to such a degree, that we would willingly accept any technical excuse—if it be only the relative length of the wings and tail—to substantiate in the closet our field observations.

Although Mr. Ridgway's classification may be, as he says, "one based upon comparatively artificial characters," we regard it as the best we have, and think it probable that whatever modification may ultimately prove necessary will result mainly from the consideration of exotic material that is not here taken into account.

A judicious conservatism marks Mr. Ridgway's handling of specific matters, in the recognition of geographical races, which has now become imperative, and in due allowance for variation in plumage, not only with sex and age, but in the more puzzling ways of melanism, etc., to which hawks seem specially susceptible. A number of nominal species of *Tinnunculus* are reduced to regional races; all the gyrfalcons are treated in the same way; our *Pandion*, *Archibuteo*, *Craxirex* and *Polyborus*, with *Falco anatum*, are referred, as varieties, to their respective analogues. *Accipiter Mexicanus* is dropped; and the silence regarding that somewhat celebrated bird, *Haliaetus Washingtonii*, is expressive. (By the way, as neither *H. albicilla* nor *H. pelagicus* has been actually taken in our country, *leucocephalus* is our only species.) The

agitation in the difficult genus *Buteo*, raised some years since by Dr. Bryant, is quieted by an unequivocal confirmation of the general tenor of that gentleman's views; *elegans*, *calurus*, *montanus*, *Bairdii*, *insignatus*, *oxypterus*, and *albonotatus* being all suppressed. Those that he gives as valid are, 1 (with four outer quills emarginate), *Cooperi*, *Harlani*, *borealis*, *lineatus*, *zonocercus*; and 2 (with three quills emarginate), *Swainsoni*, *fuliginosus*, *albifrons*, *Pennsylvanicus*. Of these, *Harlani* and *Cooperi*, will bear further investigation; neither *fuliginosus* nor *albifrons* really occurs within our limits; so that the total number of our unquestionable species is only five. The northernmost *Asturina* (*A. plagiata*) is allowed; so is *Ictinia Mississippiensis*. *Falco polyagrus* Cass., is properly referred to *Mexicanus* Schl.; certain differences that we pointed out some time since proving dependent upon age. Our *Aquila* is not mentioned, apparently through an oversight.

The three new species are: 1. The Cuban and Haytian *Tinnunculus*, called *Falco leucophrys*. 2. The American analogue of the European Merlin, figured and described by Richardson and Swainson as *Falco cesalon*, and subsequently spoken of by Cassin, ourselves, and others under the same name. Mr. Ridgway finds it quite distinct from *cesalon*, as it certainly is from *columbarius*, and dedicates it to Dr. Richardson. 3. *Onychotes Gruberi*, n. g. et. sp., is said to be "utterly unlike any other American species. So much does it differ in structure, that we do not feel sure that it is not from some portion of the Old World, instead of from California" (p. 150), its reputed habitat. — E. C.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE EARED SEALS.—Having been kindly apprized by Mr. Allen that he would be obliged to answer my review of his esteemed work "On the Otariadæ," I awaited with interest the number of the NATURALIST containing it. A few words in justification of the review seem to be called for.

I cannot perceive that Mr. Allen has met the objections urged against the exclusive applicability and consequently the diagnostic value of the characters used in his diagnoses of the *Oulophocinæ* and *Trichophocinæ*, and after a careful perusal of Mr. Allen's comments, I cannot admit that the significance of the tables\* and

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\*The cause of the "rather obscure comparative tables" is due to the way the printer was obliged to express the "irregular" fractions (in the small type used) in connection with the whole numbers, and I may add to the same cause is due the unusual presentation of the dental formulæ.